

BRATFEST AT TIFFANY'S

A CLIQUE NOVEL BY
LISI HARRISON



poppy

LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY
New York Boston

BRIARWOOD—OCTAVIAN COUNTRY DAY SCHOOL

THE CAFÉ

Tuesday, September 8th

7:23 A.M.

ALL STUDENTS MUST KEEP OUT UNTIL 8 A.M. NO EXCEPTIONS.

“Puh-lease!” Massie Block ripped the sign off the frosted glass doors of the Café.

“What are you *doing*?” gasped Claire Lyons, searching the empty hall for witnesses.

“It’s a piece of poster board, Kuh-laire.” Massie kicked it aside. “What’s it gonna do, paper-cut us to death?”

Claire giggle-shrugged.

“Now get serious. This mission is top priority.” Massie gripped the door’s silver pump handle, with its back-to-school shine, and then paused to admire her deeply tanned, Chanel No. 19-scented hands.

Their rich butterscotch hue said, “Why, yes, my summer *was* perfect. I feel confident, relaxed, and on top of my game. I’m ready for the new year. Ready for the Briarwood boys to move into OCD. Ready to meet *and* defeat the new crop of seventh-graders. Ready to dominate—eighth-grade alpha style.”

But if asked, her heart would have told a very different story. . . .

More than anything, Massie wanted to collapse on the freshly waxed floor, curl into the fetal position, and roll

straight into the school shrink's office. Once comfortable, she'd tell Dr. Baum how she'd been stressing about this day since mid-May. How she was secretly afraid of the Briarwood boys. How her alpha status was in jeopardy. And how she was on high alert, in extreme danger of becoming an LBR.

"What exactly is an LBR?" Dr. Baum would ask, burgundy Montblanc poised above her yellow legal pad.

"Loser beyond repair."

"Ahhh." She would make note. "And why are you so afraid of *boys*?"

"I'm not afraid of *boys*," Massie would snap. "Just the Briarwood ones. Well, actually the soccer players."

Dr. Baum would remove her rectangular black plastic Lens-Crafters frames and re-cross her hose-covered legs. "Go on."

Massie would inhale deeply and then continue.

"Last year, the Pretty Committee won this key to a bomb shelter in the basement of OCD. Inside, there was a flat-screen that linked to the boys' sensitivity-training class at Briarwood. We watched it a few times and heard all of their secret confessions. . . ."

Dr. Baum's thin, coral pink lips would part, but knowing it was her job to listen and not judge people for spying, she'd nod attentively and continue speed-writing.

"After that we kind of started acting like freaks around our crushes because we thought we knew what they were thinking, even though it turns out we really didn't, so they all dumped us at Skye Hamilton's end-of-the-year costume party."

Flipping to a new sheet of paper, the shrink would continue scribbling at a wrist-snapping pace.

“And it’s not so much being *dumped* that bugs me,” Massie would explain, “because it’s kind of alpha to have a bunch of ex-crushes. It shows you have experience.”

“So what *is* it that bugs you?” Dr. Baum would finally allow herself to ask.

Massie would run her hand across the pea green chenille fabric on the worn couch, searching for the best way to explain.

“It bugs me how the girls at OCD are so super-excited to have boys at our school.”

Dr. Baum would stop writing, look up, and put on her LensCrafters. Her head would tilt slightly to the right, and her black, overgrown brows would collide in confusion.

“*Be-cause*,” Massie would sigh, “if they’re as excited as I know they’re going to be, the boys will be upgraded to ‘beyond popular’ status, which automatically makes *them* the new alphas. And if the new alphas don’t like *us*—which they don’t—the Pretty Committee will be downgraded to LBRs. And if I become an LBR . . .” She’d look up at the white stucco ceiling, reversing the direction of her hot tears. “And if I become an LBR, I’ll have to move to Canada and start over and . . .” Massie would look at the doctor intensely. “And Glossip Girl doesn’t ship to Canada.” She’d grab a Puffs Plus from the wicker box on the end table and blow. “No one does.”

At this point Dr. Baum would immediately put down her

notes, buzz her secretary, and insist she cancel all appointments for the rest of the year so she could devote all of her time to this very serious crisis. . . .

Hence, Massie's early-morning decision to hyper-gloss.

The idea was to quadruple the weight of her lips, transforming them into an impenetrable wall. That way, her insecurities would be trapped inside her body, unable to escape. Better they stay churning and burning in the pit of her stomach than make themselves known on this crucial day, where first impressions could make or break the entire year.

"Are you sure we need to do this *now*?" Claire's desperate whine forced Massie back to reality.

"More than sure." Massie reached into her Be & D silver-and-black Venus bowler bag and pulled out a purple glitter-covered placard. She slapped it into Claire's clammy hands.

Claire lifted her canvas beige bucket hat and scanned the glistening script with her wide blue eyes. "Table eighteen reserved for the Pretty Committee?"

"That's what it says." Massie beamed. The shiny, swirly letters were symbolic of her secret pledge—to sparkle and shine every day in the eighth grade.

Over the weekend, she'd ransacked the Westchester Mall, and bought up anything and everything that reflected light. But now, as the bright morning sun flooded the vacant halls of Briarwood–Octavian Country Day, Massie's long-sleeved indigo sequin Tory Burch top suddenly reminded her of a tacky *Dancing with the Stars* contestant. And that made her snippier than Katie Holmes's hairdresser in 2007.

“Kuh-laire!” she huffed. “Eighteen is *our* table. I don’t want some LBR seventh-grader or a pack of Briarwood boys to claim it. Do you?”

Claire knit her blond brows, which looked whiter than usual against her sun-soaked skin. “Why don’t I just wait here, so when they open the doors, I’ll be the first one in?” She glanced over her shoulder and checked the big white clock above a BOYS “R” US banner the student council had spray-painted on a white Frette sheet.

“Um, are you my favorite Chinese takeout dish?” Massie tossed her long dark bangs past her gold-dusted cheekbones.

“No, why?”

“Then why act all gung ho?”

“I’m not.” Claire reddened. “I just don’t understand why I have to break into the Café and risk getting in trouble on my first day back.”

Massie twirled the purple hair streak below her right ear, which she’d dyed during her summer stint in Southampton. If anyone asked, she’d say a Parisian fashion insider had entrusted her with this soon-to-be-international trend. It was much easier than explaining the truth. And a lot more believable.

“We’re not *breaking in*.” Massie air-quoted Claire. “This is *our* school. *Our* Café. *Our* right!” She hiked up her stylishly slouchy charcoal gray satin knee-length shorts. “Why should *we* be punished because the rooftop wave pool at Briarwood imploded? It’s not our fault the entire school is flooded, is it?”

Claire opened her mouth to respond, but Massie quickly cut her off.

“Smell that?” She lifted her tiny ski-slope nose and sniffed. “Paint fumes. The number-one cause of red, itchy eyes. And look. . . .” Her head tilted left, toward the blue stick figure that had been superglued to the door of her favorite bathroom. “Say goodbye to the only mirror in school opposite a window. From now on, we’ll be glossing under fluorescents. Which, by the way, will make us look like Kermit the minute our tans fade.”

Claire surrender-sighed.

“Now let’s move. The girls are waiting outside.” Once again, Massie leaned against the silver door handle, and after a single pump, they were in.

“Eh. Ma. Gawd,” she gasped.

Claire removed her bucket hat. “What *is* all this?”

They stood in awe, gazing at the Café, which had been transformed into a massive, sun-drenched greenhouse. The new walls were made of glass, and the room’s perimeter was lined with mini vegetable gardens framed by low white picket fences. The gardens sprouted ripe red tomatoes, carrots, scallions, peas, cucumbers, and fresh herbs. Rows of new bamboo tables and chairs displayed photos of the happily wrinkled local Westchester artisans who had crafted them. The Starbucks kiosk had been replaced by a charming, old-fashioned stagecoach. It stocked skin-clarifying Borba water (imported from Hong Kong) and drinkable low-fat yogurt guaranteed to speed up hair growth (head only) and increase shine in less than a week. Quaint country chalkboard signs listed the day’s freshest produce (edamame and

carrots) and the breakfast specials (buttermilk pancakes with chicken sausages, organic eggs Benedict, granola with locally grown fruit), lunch specials (mac 'n' cheese sprinkled with nitrate-free bacon, free-range-turkey burgers, pizza with fresh tomatoes and mozzarella), and desserts (protein-packed chocolate brownies, calorie-burning mint-chip ice-cream cake, tooth-whitening lollipops).

No more steel bars, plastic trays, or orange heat lamps. The Café had become a fabulously ah-dorable, eco-friendly farmer's market gone twenty-first century.

Claire fanned her flushed cheeks with the RESERVED FOR placard. "This is totally—"

"Lame!" Massie barked.

"Huh?"

"How could they do this to me?" Massie gripped her roiling stomach. "I feel like someone replaced my entire wardrobe with, with . . . with *yours*."

Claire rolled her eyes.

"I've been violated."

"How? It's ten times nicer than—"

"The old Café was *mine*. The pine-scented wood, the short-cut to the sushi bar, the Picassos my grandmother donated—I *knew* that place. And now it feels like it belongs to someone else." Massie tugged her purple hair streak. "Someone who loves Birkenstocks and political bumper stickers."

"But—"

"All the more reason to claim our table." Massie cracked her knuckles for the first time in her life. "We need to send

the message that things are going to stay the same.” She elbow-nudged Claire. “Now will you puh-lease go do it already.”

“Fine.” Claire shot Massie an *if-I-get-in-trouble-it’s-all-your-fault* look. To which Massie responded with a *stop-being-so-pathetically-dramatic* glare. After another sharp exhale, Claire made a run for it.

If anything, Massie still had control over her friend. But whether she still had control over anyone else at the brand-new BOCD remained to be seen.

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